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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, December 13, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WINTER CHEESE DISHES." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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If the housekeeper and cook at the White House haven't been studying up on cheese recipes during the past month, I'll be very surprised. And if cheese dishes haven't been figuring largely in Presidential meals, I'll also be surprised. Probably you have heard about the huge gift from Wisconsin that came to the White House pantry one day last month. It was a cheddar cheese weighing 1250 pounds and made from enough milk to sink a ship -- a small ship, of course. To be exact, 5 thousand quarts of milk went into the making of that cheese. The cheese is supposed to be an exact duplicate of the first cheese ever made in this country which was presented to Thomas Jefferson in 1802. The presentation at the White House last month followed as faithfully as possible the ceremony of 133 years ago. Well, cheese-making in America has progressed considerably since Jefferson's day. Today Wisconsin produces about two-thirds of all the cheddar cheese manufactured in the United States and New York more than any of the other States.

Reading about the President's cheese reminded me that it was high time we had some more cheese conversation since cheese makes so many good winter dishes and is especially useful for meals without meat, for quick meals for a busy season like this.

I'd like to say right at the start that cheese deserves a place on your list of food bargains. Of course, that doesn't include all cheese. You'll find plenty of expensive cheese on the market -- for example, many imported cheeses with high prices. But our good American cheddar cheese -- which also goes by the name of American cheese or plain cheddar cheese -- is one of the best buys in substantial food on the market. It belongs in the class of main-dish foods along with meat and fish and eggs because it is rich in both protein and fat. It is high in phosphorus, and it's a good source of vitamin A, too. But cheese is not only a main-dish food. It also is most useful in adding flavor and food value to other parts of the meal from soup to salad, and from vegetables and bread to dessert.

Because of its special tangy flavor cheese combines well with bland, mild-flavored foods, especially starchy foods like bread, macaroni, rice, spaghetti, noodles, hominy or potatoes. You can make any number of low-cost, delicious dishes just by combining one of these starchy cereal foods with cheese. But many flavorsome foods go well with cheese, too -- tomatoes and onions, for example.

That reminds me of onion soup with cheese -- a delicious soup if ever there was one, and excellent for a cold winter night. Some people call this French onion soup. A favorite way to serve it is in brown French earthenware soup bowls. To make this soup, you cook chopped onions in butter or other fat

until they turn yellow, then add hot water and simmer until tender. Then add meat broth. Thicken with flour-and-water mixed. Add salt and pepper. Pour the soup into bowls and place on top of each a slice of toasted bread. Sprinkle cheese over the bread and steaming soup and serve at once. Cheese and onion soup is a great favorite at men's clubs and restaurants. That's a hint for the lady who wants to reach a man's heart with a cheese dish.

But what I started to talk about was some quick main dishes made of cheese.

Baked macaroni or spaghetti with cheese is a popular and inexpensive dish. Just alternate layers of boiled macaroni with cheese white-sauce. Buttered crumbs sprinkled over the top. Bake in a moderate oven for about 30 minutes.

Baked eggs and rice in tomato sauce is another good dish. You put a layer of rice on the bottom of a shallow greased baking dish. Then you drop raw eggs carefully on the rice and pour thickened tomato-sauce over the eggs and rice. Cover the top with grated cheese and buttered crumbs. Bake in a slow oven until the eggs are set.

Both these baked dishes you serve right in the baking dish.

Cheese dreams -- you've heard of these. Well, there's an easy cheese dish that is approved by the Bureau of Home Economics along with the others I've been mentioning. To make cheese dreams Bureau-style you slice bread thin, take off the crusts, and make sandwiches with a filling of sliced sharp-flavored cheese, a sprinkling of salt and a drop or two of tabasco sauce, but no butter. Now, in a heavy skillet, melt sufficient butter to cover the bottom and brown those cheese sandwiches delicately and rather slowly on both sides. Be sure the butter doesn't get so hot that it browns the sandwiches before the bread heats through and the cheese melts. That's all. Just serve at once. Very good with vegetable salad or sardines.

By the way, you've probably also heard of another kind of cheese dreams-- the kind you are supposed to get after eating a lot of cheese at night. Perhaps you've been told that cheese is an indigestible food. That's a notion some people have. But my friends at the Bureau of Home Economics say that the blame doesn't belong on that good food cheese but rather on the way some people cook and eat it. Cheese is a concentrated food. So it deserves its place as the nourishing part of the meal -- not as something to eat at the end of a hearty meal. A big piece of cheese to top off a big piece of pie at the end of a big meal -- well, that's what's likely to bring on the nightmares. But cheese eaten properly is a good food for almost everybody, children included.

As for cooking cheese, that's important too, for the way cheese is cooked affects its digestibility. Like other protein foods, cheese becomes tough with too long cooking or too much heat. You can easily overcook it. That makes it limpy, stringy, and tough. Remember that cheese needs low heat always and very little cooking. For most cheese dishes, it's a good idea to grate or flake or shave the cheese -- break it up in some way and distribute it through the other ingredients of the dish. It will melt more quickly this way and take less cooking than it will when left in a big lump.

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